The SAGA of the SWAMP THING

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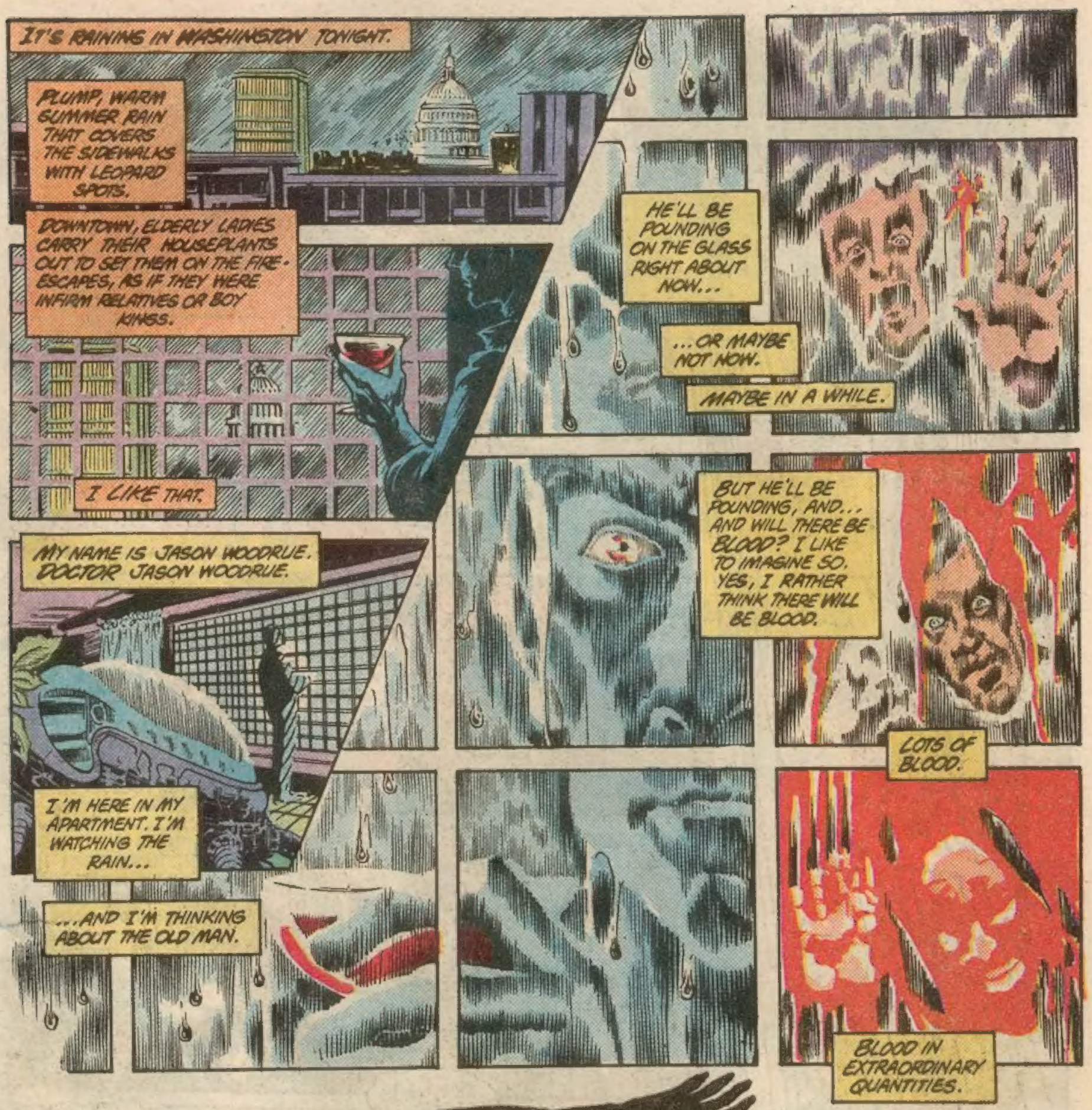
IT'S RAINING IN WASHINGTON TONIGHT.
PLUMP, WARM SUMMER RAIN THAT COVERS THE SIDEWALKS WITH LEOPARD SPOTS.
DOWNTOWN, ELDERLY LADIES CARRY THEIR HOUSEPLANTS OUT TO SET THEM ON THE FIRE-ESCAPES, AS IF THEY WERE INFIRM RELATIVES OR BOY KINGS.
I LIKE THAT.
MY NAME IS JASON WOODRUE. DOCTOR JASON WOODRUE.
I'M HERE IN MY APARTMENT. I'M WATCHING THE RAIN...
...AND I'M THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN.
HE'LL BE POUNDING ON THE GLASS RIGHT ABOUT NOW...
...OR MAYBE NOT NOW.
MAYBE IN A WHILE.
BUT HE'LL BE POUNDING, AND... AND WILL THERE BE BLOOD? I LIKE TO IMAGINE SO. YES, I RATHER THINK THERE WILL BE BLOOD.
LOTS OF BLOOD.
BLOOD IN EXTRAORDINARY QUANTITIES.

THE ANATOMY LESSON

ALAN MOORE: SCRIPT

TATJANA WOOD, COLORIST

JOHN COSTANZA: LETTERING

STEPHEN BISSETTE & JOHN TOTLEBEN: ARTISTS

LEN WEIN: EDITOR

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I REMEMBER THE OLD MAN SHOWING ME AROUND HIS BUILDING.

HE WAS SO PROUD OF IT. LIKE A CHILD WITH THE BIGGEST DOLLHOUSE IN THE WORLD.

OF COURSE, THIS WAS AFTER HIS CORPORATION HAD SECURED MY RELEASE FROM JAIL.

WELL?

IT'S VERY... EMPTY.

I'D EXPECTED A HIGHER SECURITY PROFILE.

IT'S ALL *ELECTRONIC*, DR. WOODRUE. SILICONE SENTRIES WITH DIGITAL DOGS...

...AND I CONTROL EVERYTHING FROM A CONSOLE NO BIGGER THAN A CHECKERBOARD. SPARES ME A LOT OF GRIEF WITH *LABOR RELATIONS*.

FSSSSS

THROUGH HERE...

HE'S IN *HERE*? HOW LONG HAS HE...?

ABOUT TWO WEEKS. HE'S BEEN HERE SINCE WE *SHOT* HIM.

WELL, DR. WOODRUE, DON'T BE AFRAID.

OPEN IT UP.

THERE...

...GRAY, BRITTLE, TATTOOED BY FROST, QUITE DEAD...

THIS WAS MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE...

SWAMP THING

CREATED BY: LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON

AND... THIS... WAS ONCE A HUMAN BEING?

HIS NAME WAS ALEC HOLLAND. HE WAS A DOCTOR, LIKE YOURSELF.

HE WAS DOING GOVERNMENT WORK, DEVELOPING SOMETHING CALLED A BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA, WHICH WAS INTENDED TO PROMOTE CROP GROWTH.

THE EXPERIMENT WAS SABOTAGED. THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION...

HOLLAND AND HIS CHEMICAL SOUP WENT INTO THE SWAMP WHERE THE PROJECT WAS LOCATED.

THIS IS WHAT CAME OUT.

YOU MENTIONED A LINDA HOLLAND...

HIS WIFE AND CO-WORKER. YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE... LIBERAL, EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS. CARING AND SHARING.

HIS WIFE WAS SHOT AND KILLED SHORTLY AFTER HOLLAND VANISHED IN THE EXPLOSION. SHE'S THE REASON YOU'RE HERE, WOODRUE.

"YOU SEE, WE GOT INTERESTED IN THIS FORMULA THAT HOLLAND HAD BEEN WORKING ON. WE HAD HER EXHUMED.

"IT MADE SENSE. AFTER ALL, APART FROM HER HUSBAND, SHE WAS THE ONLY HUMAN WHO'D BEEN EXPOSED TO THE FORMULA. SHE'D BEEN WORKING WITH THE STUFF FOR MONTHS...

"WE FIGURED IT MAY HAVE PERMEATED HER CELLULAR STRUCTURE, JUST THROUGH THE REPEATED SKIN CONTACT.

"SO WE DUG HER UP, AND WE HAD SOME PEOPLE POKE AROUND A LITTLE...

"KNOW WHAT WE FOUND?"

NOTHING.

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CONTINUED ON 3½ PAGE FOLLOWING.

OH, THE FORMULA *HAD* COLLECTED IN HER BODY. IT JUST HADN'T *DONE* ANYTHING.

NO REASON WHY IT *SHOULD*, OF COURSE. THE FORMULA WASN'T DESIGNED TO AFFECT *HUMAN* TISSUE.

JUST PLANTS...

...EXCEPT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN OUR FRIEND IN THE *CRYOCHEST*, DOES IT?

WE'D ASSUMED THAT THE FORMULA HAD SOMEHOW TURNED HOLLAND INTO A PLANT. IF IT DOESN'T AFFECT HUMAN TISSUE, THAT IS PATENTLY *IMPOSSIBLE*.

YOU BEGIN TO SEE WHY WE ARRANGED YOUR RELEASE FROM JAIL, DR. WOODRUE?

SPEAKING OF WHICH...

SHLUNK

...I BELIEVE IT'S TIME THAT I SAW YOUR *CREDENTIALS*.

THAT ISN'T YOUR *SKIN* IS IT? MY FILES SAY IT'S *ARTIFICIAL*. YOU CAN *DISSOLVE* IT.

YOUR FILES ARE VERY *ACCURATE*, GENERAL.

THERE.

SATISFIED?

PERFECTLY. YOU'RE WOODRUE.

YOU'RE THE *FLORONIC MAN*.

WHEN CAN YOU *START*?

I STARTED THE NEXT DAY.

THE OLD REPTILE KNEW I'D START THE NEXT DAY. HE KNEW I'D DO ANY DAMN THING HE PLEASED IF IT KEPT ME OUT OF PRISON.

THE OLD REPTILE.

I WONDER IF HE'S POUNDING YET?

POUNDING ON THE GLASS, HIS FISTS LIKE WITHERED LITTLE APPLES...

ANYWAY.

I STARTED THE NEXT DAY.

WITH THE AUTOPSY.

I REMEMBER CLEARLY THE MOMENT BEFORE I BEGAN TO CUT:

I WAS VERY... EXCITED.

SINCE THE BIO-CHEMICAL FLUKE THAT HAD TRANSFORMED ME, I HAD LONGED FOR A CHANCE TO EXAMINE ANOTHER HUMAN-VEGETABLE HYBRID. I COULD LEARN SO MUCH.

SO MUCH ABOUT MYSELF.

I'D HEARD OF THE LEGENDARY SWAMP MAN, OF COURSE. THERE WAS THAT AWFUL BOOK BY... WAS HER NAME TREMAYNE? YES. I THINK SO. TREMAYNE.

I'D OFTEN FANTASIZED ABOUT THE CHANCE TO EXAMINE SUCH AN ORGANISM UP CLOSE...

...AND THIS WAS AS CLOSE AS ONE WAS LIKELY TO GET.

I OPENED HIM UP. HE HAD THINGS INSIDE HIM.

THERE WERE TWO LARGE, POD-LIKE STRUCTURES WITHIN THE CHEST CAVITY...

WHAT *ARE* THEY? HIS *LUNGS* OR SOMETHING?

NO. THEY *LOOK* LIKE LUNGS...

...BUT *HUMAN* LUNGS HAVE TINY *CAPILLARY TUBES* THAT LET OXYGEN PASS THROUGH INTO THE BLOOD. THAT'S WHAT LUNGS ARE *FOR*.

THESE ARE VEGETABLE FIBER. VEGETABLE FIBERS ARE TOO *COARSE* TO ALLOW MOLECULES OF OXYGEN THROUGH IN THAT WAY. THESE THINGS SUCK AND BLOW...

...AND THEY DON'T DO ANYTHING ELSE. THEY DON'T *WORK*. THEY'RE NOT LUNGS.

I WONDER WHAT THEY ARE?

I WONDERED THE SAME THING ABOUT THE SPONGE LIKE VEGETABLE BRAIN THAT WE FOUND INSIDE THE LEATHERY SKULL.

EVEN WITHOUT THE BULLET HOLE IT COULDN'T POSSIBLY WORK. IT HAD NO SYNAPSE GAPS

I WONDERED ABOUT THE USELESS HEART

I WONDERED ABOUT THE UNWORKABLE PSEUDO-KIDNEYS.

I WONDERED HOW LONG I COULD GO ON DRAWING *BLANKS* BEFORE THE OLD MAN SENT ME BACK TO JAIL.

I WONDERED.

THOSE WERE LONG WEEKS. LONG AND FRUITLESS.

I SAW A LOT MORE OF THE OLD MAN, MY DISTASTE RIPENING TOWARD LOATHING WITH EACH ENCOUNTER.

IN THE EVENINGS, WHEN THE MINIMAL STAFF HAD GONE HOME, HE WOULD STROLL PROUDLY AROUND THAT HUGE AND EMPTY TOMB OF A BUILDING.

SOMETIMES HE'D INSIST THAT I ACCOMPANY HIM.

HE'D TALK ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC SECURITY, ABOUT HOW ALL THE DOORS WERE CONTROLLED FROM HIS OFFICE...

SOMETIMES HE'D TALK TO ME ABOUT MY CAREER PROSPECTS.

THE WORD "FREAK" WAS USED AT LEAST ONCE.

JAIL WAS MENTIONED.

AND I STOOD THERE.

AND I TOOK IT.

AND EVERY NIGHT I CAME BACK TO THESE SPECIAL APARTMENTS THAT HE'D RENTED FOR ME.

AND EVERY MORNING I SET TO WORK HAULING ORGANS THAT COULDN'T WORK OUT OF A BODY THAT HAD NEVER NEEDED THEM.

THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA HAD TURNED HOLLAND INTO A PLANT... EXCEPT THAT IT COULDN'T HAVE. IT DIDN'T WORK ON HUMAN TISSUE.

THE SWAMP THING HAD ORGANS LIKE THOSE OF ANY LIVING CREATURE...

...EXCEPT THAT THEY DID NOT, COULD NOT, AND HAD NOT BEEN DESIGNED TO FUNCTION.

IT WAS MORE THAN A HUMAN MIND COULD EVER BE EXPECTED TO UNRAVEL.

I HAD THE ANSWER WITHIN SIX WEEKS.

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

IT WAS AS IF THE CLOUDS WERE SUDDENLY BLOWN AWAY.

I WAS WORKING LATE. I WAS TIRED. I OPENED A REFERENCE BOOK AT THE WRONG PAGE AND BEGAN TO READ...

IT WAS AN ESSAY ON PLANARIAN WORMS.

NOT WHAT I WANTED AT ALL...

AND THEN, SUDDENLY...

...THERE IT WAS.

AS PLAIN AS THE NOSE ON YOUR FACE.

THE ANSWER.

MY SKIN IS DRY.

OUTSIDE IT IS RAINING.

I AM THINKING OF LIVER-SPOTTED FINGERS CLAWING AT UNBREAKABLE GLASS.

I AM THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN, THERE IN HIS OFFICE WHEN I WENT TO TELL HIM OF MY DISCOVERY, LATE THIS AFTERNOON.

I AM THINKING ABOUT MELTING FROST, AND TRICKLING WATER...

...AND SOMETHING STRONG AND SOFT AND GREEN, THRUSTING THROUGH THE DEAD AND PETRIFIED GRAYNESS.

THE OLD MAN HAS NO ONE BUT HIMSELF TO BLAME. HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND, EVEN WHEN I EXPLAINED IT TO HIM. HE DIDN'T LISTEN...

WELL, DR. WOODRUE? I'M LISTENING.

PLANARIAN WORMS, GENERAL!

THEY'RE THE KEY. THE KEY TO EVERYTHING!

OH MY GOD, IT'S SO OBVIOUS!

YOU SEE, A WHILE AGO, SOME PEOPLE DID AN EXPERIMENT. THEY TAUGHT A PLANARIAN WORM TO RUN A SIMPLE MAZE. THEY EDUCATED IT.

THEN THEY CHOPPED IT UP AND FED ITS REMAINS TO A BATCH OF PLANARIAN WORMS THAT COULDN'T RUN THE MAZE...

...EXCEPT THAT AFTER DIGESTING THEIR EDUCATED COMRADE, THE WORMS COULD RUN THE MAZE PERFECTLY!

DON'T YOU SEE, GENERAL? THE IMPLICATION IS THAT CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTELLIGENCE CAN BE PASSED ON AS FOODSTUFFS!

THAT MAYBE EXPLAINS THE CUSTOM AMONG CANNIBAL TRIBES OF EATING THE WISE MAN AFTER HIS DEATH IN ORDER TO RECEIVE HIS WISDOM.

GENERAL, YOU COULD GO INTO A DELICATESSEN AND ORDER EINSTEIN ON PUMPERNICKEL...

DOCTOR WOODRUE...

...I AM BECOMING ANGRY.

YOU TALK ABOUT WORMS, YOU TALK ABOUT CANNIBALS... NONE OF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH HOLLAND.

NONE OF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE JOB I'M PAYING YOU FOR.

ALL RIGHT, GENERAL.

ALL RIGHT.

LET'S TALK ABOUT HOLLAND. LET'S TALK ABOUT HIS ACCIDENT...

"IMAGINE HIM, REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS THERE IN HIS CABIN THAT NIGHT...

"THERE'S SOMETHING TAPED TO THE UNDERSIDE OF HIS WORKBENCH. WITH MOUNTING APPREHENSION HE SCRABBLES TOWARD IT...

"IT'S DYNAMITE

FIVE STICKS OF IT

"AND HE'S MAYBE EIGHTEEN INCHES AWAY FROM IT WHEN IT EXPLODES

"THE COMBINED EFFECTS OF THE BLAST AND THE REFLEX MUSCLES IN HIS LEGS PROPEL HIM THROUGH THE DOOR AND INTO THE SWAMP...

"ALEC HOLLAND IS ALREADY DEAD.

"HIS BODY GOES INTO THE SWAMP ALONG WITH THE FORMULA THAT IT IS SATURATED WITH.

AND, ONCE THERE...

"... IT DECOMPOSES.

"A PATCH OF SWAMPLAND LIKE THAT WOULD BE TEEMING WITH MICRO-ORGANISMS. IT WOULDN'T TAKE LONG, GENERAL.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PLANTS IN THE SWAMP? THE PLANTS THAT HAVE BEEN ALTERED BY THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA?

"THE PLANTS WHOSE HUNGRY ROOT SYSTEMS ARE BUSILY INGESTING THE MORTAL REMAINS OF ALEC HOLLAND?

"THOSE PLANTS EAT HIM. THEY EAT HIM AS IF HE WERE A PLANARIAN WORM, OR A CANNIBAL WISE MAN, OR A GENIUS ON RYE!

"THEY EAT HIM...

"... AND THEY BECOME INFECTED BY A POWERFUL CONSCIOUSNESS THAT DOES NOT REALIZE IT IS NO LONGER ALIVE!"

"IMAGINE THAT CLOUDY, CONFUSED INTELLIGENCE, POSSIBLY WITH ONLY THE VAGUEST NOTION OF SELF, TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF ITS NEW ENVIRONMENT...

GRADUALLY SHAPING THE PLANT CELLS THAT IT NOW INHABITS INTO A SHAPE THAT IT'S MORE COMFORTABLE WITH.

"IT REMEMBERS HAVING BONES, AND SO IT BUILDS ITSELF A SKELETON OF WOOD. IT REMEMBERS HAVING MUSCLE AND CONSTRUCTS MUSCLES FROM SUPPLE PLANT FIBER...

"IT REMEMBERS HAVING LUNGS, AND A HEART, AND A BRAIN... AND IT DOES ITS BEST TO DUPLICATE THEM.

"YOU SEE, WE WERE WRONG, GENERAL.

"WE THOUGHT THAT THE SWAMP THING WAS ALEC HOLLAND. SOMEHOW TRANSFORMED INTO A PLANT. IT WASN'T.

IT WAS A PLANT THAT THOUGHT IT WAS ALEC HOLLAND.

A PLANT THAT WAS TRYING ITS LEVEL BEST TO BE ALEC HOLLAND...

...AND THAT PATHETIC, MISSHAPEN PARODY DOWNSTAIRS IN THE *CRYO-CHEST* WAS THE CLOSEST THAT IT COULD *GET.*

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING VERY *IMPORTANT.*

YOU SEE, IF THAT'S A PLANT THAT WE HAVE DOWN THERE...

DR. WOODRUE...

...I THINK I'VE HEARD ENOUGH.

ENOUGH? BUT YOU.. CAN'T *POSSIBLY* HAVE GRASPED ALL THE *RAMIFICATIONS* OF WHAT I'VE BEEN SAYING! YOU DON'T HAVE THE CORRECT *BACKGROUND!*

AND BESIDES, IF THAT *IS* A PLANT DOWN THERE...

WOODRUE!

I AM NOT, IN YOUR TERMS, AN INTELLIGENT MAN. I AM MERELY *SHREWD.*

BEING "*MERELY SHREWD*" HAS SECURED ME A VAST FINANCIAL EMPIRE AND HAS ENABLED ME TO WATCH WHILE *CLEVERER* MEN WENT PENNILESS TO THEIR GRAVES.

TRUE, I *MAY* HAVE MISSED SOME OF THE "*RAMIFICATIONS*" OF YOUR RATHER MUDDLED LITTLE SPEECH, BUT I GRASPED THE BASIC *PRINCIPLE* WELL ENOUGH.

THAT PRINCIPLE, THAT *BREAKTHROUGH*, WAS ALL THAT WAS NEEDED. THERE ARE *OTHERS* WHO CAN BE PAID TO SEE THE WORK THROUGH TO ITS *CONCLUSION.*

YOU SEE, I AM VERY *RICH.* I DO NOT *NEED* TO BE AN INTELLECTUAL.

I DO NOT *NEED* TO UNDERSTAND HOW THIS COMPUTER WORKS TO KNOW THAT IF I PUSH THAT LITTLE BUTTON, ALL THE SPRINKLERS START UP, OR THE DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE.

I DO NOT *NEED* THE RAMIFICATIONS. I DO NOT NEED THE "*CORRECT BACKGROUND.*"

AND *YOU*, DR WOODRUE, NOW THAT YOU'VE PROVIDED ME WITH MY *BREAKTHROUGH*..

...I NEED *YOU* LEAST OF ALL.

I HAVE A *PHONE CALL* TO MAKE IN THE OUTER OFFICE.

WE'LL SORT OUT THE *TERMINATION PAPERS* WHEN I GET BACK.

...AND THAT'S HOW THE OLD MAN FIRED ME.

JUST LIKE THAT.

...AND THEN HE SAUNTERED OUT OF HIS OFFICE: A SELF-MADE MAN... A COMMON MAN, BY GOD... WHO'D JUST PUT ONE OVER ON AN UPPITY INTELLECTUAL.

HE WAS CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF.

SO WAS I.

HE'D LEFT ME ALONE WITH HIS COMPUTER...

...AND I UNDERSTOOD EXACTLY HOW IT WORKED.

...AND THE THERMOSTATS IN THE FREEZER UNITS...

...AND

THE DOORS.

I AM SITTING IN APARTMENT OUTSIDE, IT IS RAINING.

I AM LAUGHING. LAUGHING VERY LOUDLY.

FRIENDS HAVE TOLD ME IT IS NOT A SOUND CONDUCIVE TO TRANQUILLITY.

I AM THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN.

HE'LL STAY LATE, WHEN EVERYONE HAS GONE. PERHAPS HE'LL READ THROUGH THE NOTES HE WOULDN'T PERMIT ME TO KEEP...

...SKIPPING THE B.G WORDS...

ALEC HOLLAND REPORT 2054

GUMBASIA

PHOTOSYNTHANS STRUCTURES

...AND THEN MAYBE HE'LL WANT TO TAKE A STROLL, LIKE EVERY OTHER NIGHT. A STROLL AROUND THE BIGGEST DOLL HOUSE IN THE WORLD.

HE'LL PUNCH ONE OF HIS LITTLE BUTTONS TO SWITCH THE DOOR MECHANISMS TO MANUAL, SO THAT HE CAN CONTROL THEM WHILE HE'S AWAY FROM HIS CHESSERBOARD.

EXIT

IDENTI CONFI

AND THEN HE'LL STRUT PROUDLY DOWN THE HALL AND THINK HOW LUCKY HE IS TO HAVE ALL THIS.

HE SHOULD HAVE LET ME FINISH. HE SHOULD HAVE LISTENED.

THEN I'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL TO HIM.

THROUGH THE HEAD

OH, YOU COULD GIVE IT SUCH A SHOCK THAT IT WOULD PLUNGE INTO A CELLULAR COMA. YOU COULD KEEP IT IN THAT STATE BY PLACING IT IN A FREEZER UNIT...

BUT YOU COULDN'T KILL IT

REALLY, THE OLD MAN COULD HAVE WORKED THAT OUT FOR HIMSELF.

CRYOGEN

HE JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE CORRECT BACKGROUND

I WONDER WHAT HE'S DOING NOW?

I WONDER HOW LONG HE'LL BE ABLE TO RESIST GOING DOWN THERE AND TAKING A LOOK?

HOLLAND

BE IN HIM TO SEE IT THE GRAY HUSK AND TEARING

AND IF THE BODY HAS ALREADY GONE...

...WHAT WILL HE DO THEN, I WONDER?

WHAT WILL THE OLD MAN DO?

WHY, I GUESS HE'LL GO BACK TO HIS OFFICE. HE'LL WANT TO PHONE A SUNDERLAND SWAT TEAM TO COME AND BAIL HIM OUT.

THAT'S WHAT A RATIONAL MAN WOULD DO.

AND A WALKING PILE OF MOLD AND LICHEN AND CLOTTED WEEDS THAT THINKS IT'S A RATIONAL MAN?

I GUESS IT WOULD DO PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING.

I WONDER WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE, SO NEW AND RAW AND GREEN...

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

. AND I WONDER HOW MUCH IT WILL HAVE SEEN?

YOU ..UH...

ARE YOU, UH, STILL... *INTELLIGENT?*

CAN YOU *UNDERSTAND* WHAT I'M SAYING?

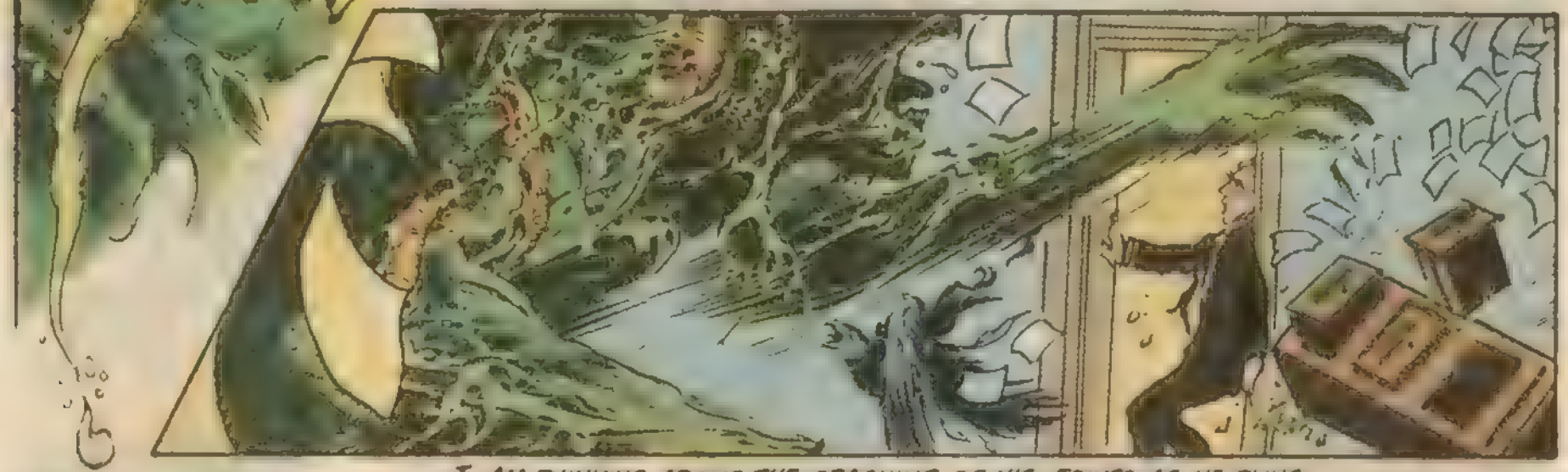
UH... THE FILE ON YOU..

UH, LOOK, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE *READ* THAT FILE THERE, BUT...

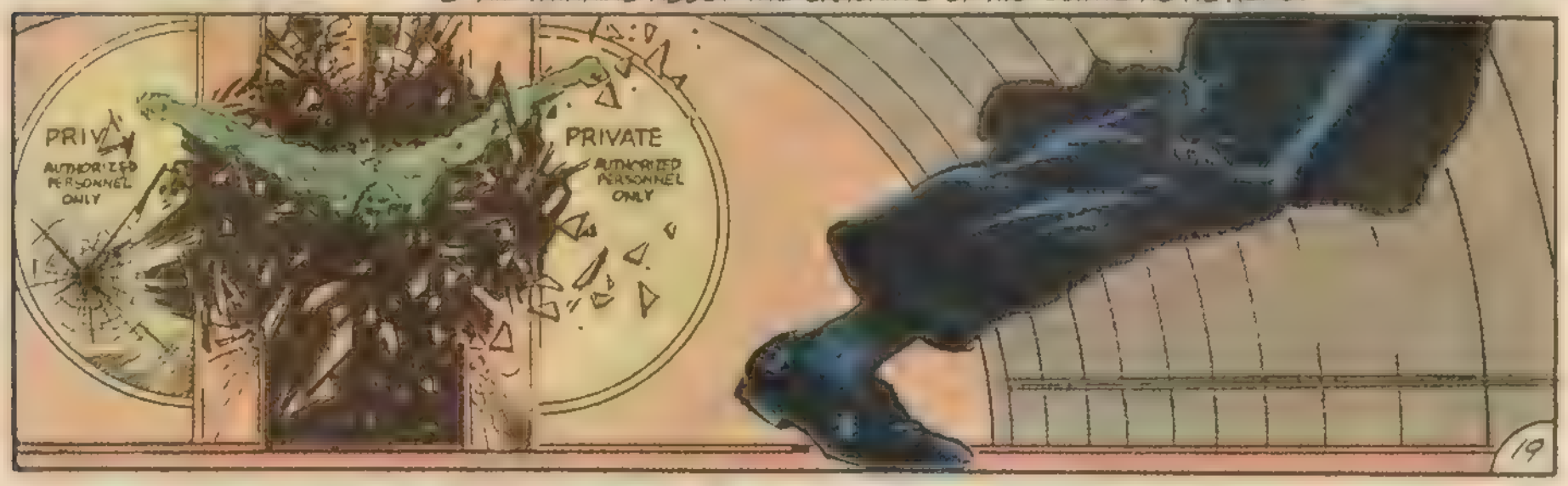
YES . I... *HAVE* READ... THE FILE.

LIKE IT?

I AM THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN.



I AM THINKING ABOUT THE CRACKING OF HIS JOINTS AS HE RUNS.



I AM THINKING OF THE TERROR IN HIS ANCIENT, ATROPHIED HEART.

THIS IS HIS BUILDING, YOU SEE.

THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE HE WAS SAFE.

NOW THE BLIND GLASS AND THE DISPASSIONATE METAL MOCKS HIM WITH HIS OWN REFLECTION, FRIGHTENED AND SMALL AND SCURRYING...

...LIKE A BEETLE IN A BOX.

LIKE A WORM IN A MAZE.

OF COURSE, THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY REAL EVIDENCE OF THE SWAMP THING INTENTIONALLY HURTING OR KILLING ANYONE.

THE OLD MAN SHOULDN'T BE IN ANY REAL DANGER AT ALL...

...AS LONG AS THE CREATURE DOESN'T READ MY NOTES.

BUT IF HE HAS READ MY NOTES...

YOU SEE, THROUGHOUT HIS MISERABLE EXISTENCE, THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE KEPT HIM SANE WAS THE HOPE THAT HE MIGHT ONE DAY REGAIN HIS HUMANITY...

...THE KNOWLEDGE THAT UNDER ALL THAT SLIME HE WAS STILL ALEC HOLLAND.

BUT IF HE'S READ MY NOTES, HE'LL KNOW THAT JUST ISN'T TRUE.

HE ISN'T ALEC HOLLAND.

HE NEVER WILL BE ALEC HOLLAND.

HE NEVER WAS ALEC HOLLAND.

HE'S JUST A GHOST.

A GHOST DRESSED IN WEEDS.

I WONDER HOW HE'LL TAKE

AND I WONDER HOW THE OLD MAN WILL TAKE IT...

...WHEN THE DOORS WON'T OPEN?

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

HE'LL POUND.

HE'LL HAMMER.

HE'LL WHEEZE AND HE'LL SCREAM AND HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND HOW THIS COULD BE HAPPENING TO HIM...

THE OLD REPTILE.

AND WILL THERE BE BLOOD?

I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T KNOW IF THERE WILL BE BLOOD.

IT ISN'T IMPORTANT.

IT WON'T SPOIL THINGS IF THERE'S NO BLOOD.

THE BLOOD DOESN'T MATTER.

JUST THE DYING.

THE DYING'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

AND WHAT THEN?

WHERE WOULD THE CREATURE GO THEN?

I HAVE TO KNOW. I HAVE TO FOLLOW HIM. THERE'S SO MUCH TO LEARN, SO MUCH TO KNOW...

WHERE WOULD I GO IF I WERE THE SWAMP THING?

I'D GO BACK TO LOUISIANA. BACK TO THE MUD AND THE STEAM AND THE FLIES...

BACK TO THE BAYOU.

BACK HOME...

I HAVE A LOT TO DO TOMORROW.

NO MATTER.

FOR THE MOMENT I AM CONTENT SIMPLY TO THINK, AND TO PLAN...

...AND TO LISTEN.

IT'S RAINING IN WASHINGTON TONIGHT.

NEXT: SWAMPED!

DC Comics Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10103

Jenette Kahn, President and Publisher
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Dear Editor,

I liked *Saga of the Swamp Thing #14-15* because: (1) It was not a saga. I like to read "The End" more than once a year. (2) Mishkin's script: He played fair with the reader, introduced all the characters early, and allowed them to play out the drama. (3) Swampy dominated most of the scenes; a reversal of recent issues. (4) John Costanza's crystallized balloons for Nat Broder's speeches. (5) Aptly comparing Swampy to "Twenty Questions": first he's animal, then vegetable, then mineral, and (6) reminding us that despite all the Swamp Things and Metamorphos, etc. running around, many now less-than-human figures *are* evil and dangerous.

On the other hand, (1) I puzzle over the unresolved future of Peter. Does he become human again? (2) In #14, Swampy gets crystallized with his right arm reaching skyward. #15 erringly points his left arm upward. (3) Page 10 of #15 was underutilized, and (4) I don't like thinking I've seen the last of the Phantom Stranger. Will he appear in any comic regularly?

ART VIDRO
34 North Court
Roslyn Heights, NY 11577

Peter is now a Tiffany lamp, Art. Oh, sorry, Len doesn't let me cut up on these pages. Serious stuff here. Yes, Peter is human again: the crystal effect wore off. As for your other points, quite a few other readers had similar comments. I'll deal with them later...—Joey

* * * * *

Dear Len,

The cover for SOTST #15 is a knockout. I think of all the issues so far, my favorites are #14-15. Bo and Scott Hampton are great. This must be their first job for DC, because if I had seen their work before, I would have remembered it. Are they assigned to do anything for DC soon? If so, where? I hope we can see more of them on Swamp Thing.

Dan Mishkin really has the Swamp Thing's character down pat. The story was fantastic! One thing, what happened to Peter Murdock? Did Nat Broder smash him to pieces after he turned him to glass or did Sally Broder and company find a way to change him back to human form again?

I'd like to say the issues were flawless, but I can't. In issue #14, page 21, where the Swamp Thing was crystallized, his right arm is up in the air and his left is lower, but in issue #15 page 2, his left arm is in the air and his right is lower. It's a terrible goof-up, but I'll forgive you if you won't let it happen again.

I'm glad to hear the Phantom Stranger will leave the pages of SOTST. Don't get me wrong. I like the character. I just think it'll be great having Swamp Thing stories lasting 23 pages every month.

MATT BRANDAL
Rt. 82, Box 3065
Livingston, MT 59047

Peter is now a paperweight on Joe Orlando's desk. All right, all right. Actually, that deal with the Swamp Thing's arm is a bona fide, grade A, genuine goof. You guys caught us. As for the Hamptons, more on them after this.—Joey

Dear Len, Nick, and Marty,

SOTST #15 was an interesting book but hardly surprising. I knew before I started reading the issue that Nat was still insane and planned to take over the world, though I didn't suspect his wife would be the one to destroy him. Or that Swamp Thing would revert to his normal mossy state and end up fighting Crystal Kid, and that the Phantom Stranger would return from the glass and show them how to defeat Mr. Crystal. I did not expect him to demonstrate teleportational abilities on other beings not in contact with him as he did to Swampy and Sally on pages 15 and 16. Once I saw the synthesizer, I knew it would be the method of Glass Man's destruction (even though I was more than a little skeptical that a musical synthesizer could do that). Still, the story was exciting and the art was great. I hope to see more work by the Brothers Hampton soon.

JEF PECKHAM
503 Marlatt Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506

You'd be surprised at the things musical synthesizers can do these days, Jef! Myself, I've got a Casiotone at home that does these letter columns, leaving me time for more intriguing pursuits. Bothering Slifer, for one. As for the Brothers Hampton...—Joey

* * * * *

Len,

So when and where are we going to see more of the Hampton brothers?

MIKE SOPP
438 W. 32
Erie, PA 16508

Well, Scott Hampton will be illustrating some of Todd Klein's stories in our upcoming **New Talent Showcase**. *It's a book we've nurtured for a long time, and we're all excited about its premiere. As for Bo, I haven't seen him since school days. I wish he'd call...—Joey*

* * * * *

Dear Marty, Len, and Karen,

"Empires Made of Sand" in SOTST #15 was no better than the first part of the tale the issue before. I found the story trite and dull, containing nothing comics readers haven't seen done countless times before. A scientist's experiments go awry and he becomes a monster, going mad in the process, getting drunk with power and deciding to take over the world, with his wife as his queen? Only Nat twirling his moustache and tying a girl to a buzzsaw could have made the story more ... zzzzzzzzzzz.

If Dan Mishkin as a "guest" writer seemed like one of those visitors who simply won't leave, Bo and Scott Hampton are welcome at my home any time. Their work is consistently excellent and I think they'll go far.

Concerning page seven, though: Can Phantom Stranger and his Strangerettes play at our spring dance?

DAVID ALLEN
Olney Central College
5 Douglas Drive
Olney, IL 62450

You bet Bo and Scott are gonna go far, David. In fact, they're gonna take you up on that generous offer of yours. I only hope you and your neighbors are prepared for our arrival, and your town can accustom itself to the fetid stench of ... india ink!—Joey

Dear Len,

I was reading through a recent issue, when I turned the page and saw an ad for three DC action figures: Warlord, Hercules, and Arak.

I'm a fan of Swamp Thing, and I was hoping that you could create a figure that was fully poseable of Swampy.

BILLY DUNCAN
24 Beattie
Lennoxville, Quebec
21M 2A2

There's no such figure as yet, but maybe some entrepraneurial licensee will see your letter and figure there's a demand for just such an item. The Swamp Thing Lawn Fertilizer and the Swamp Thing Venus-Flytrap Kits have gone through the roof, so there's no telling what we'll merchandise next!—Joey

• • • • •

Dear Marty (may I call you Marty?),

Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm one of the 100 lucky runners-up of the Great Swamp Thing Movie Contest (remember us?), and I received the first issue of my year's subscription last week. All I want to say is, if you ran the contest to cull new fans for Swampy, you succeeded. I had never read an issue of THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING (the impulse that led me to enter was sheer greed rather than of altruistic fandom), but I really enjoyed my first issue. Swampy is very appealing, and I could sit and look at the artwork for hours. In fact, I did.

I will admit that I was grateful for the flashbacks that provided an explanation for what was going on, though. Without them I would have been dangerously lost. Anyway, now that I know this sort of thing is going on, I look forward to a long and happy relationship with Swampy and his associates.

Incidentally, about that tour through the famous DC think-tank ... I don't suppose you would offer one to a mere runner-up, if she happened to be in New York?

P.S. I am a petite 21-year-old brunette with green eyes, and, if I do say so myself, great legs.

SUSAN SPENCER
299 Albert Dr.
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Er, sure, kid, the tour deal is still open, whenever you're in the neighborhood. Exactly which of the Swampy "associates" did you say you wanted a "long and happy relationship" with? By the way, Marty has nothing to do with Swamp Thing anymore. I do. I write and draw every issue, the covers, the ads, the indicia, I choose the paper stock, the typeface, the works. I roll each issue off the press, sign the checks, and make lunch. I know Swamp Thing personally. *We talk all the time. His cable address is SHAMBLINGPARODYOFAMAN. We're both great vegetarians. Actually, I'm a vegeterian; he's vegetation. He's great on a salad. You'll see when you get here.*

When can you get here?—Joey Cavalieri

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MEANWHILE...

...BACK AT THE RANCH...
with guest columnist Robert Loren Fleming

If you enjoy team books such as THE NEW TEEN TITANS, BATMAN & THE OUTSIDERS, THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES and THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, prepare yourselves for THRILLER... because it's **not** like **any** of them! THRILLER refers to the main character, an omnipotent, ethereal female who performs the godlike function of manipulating and coordinating earthly events. Sort of a cross between Jesus Christ and my mom.

THRILLER's team is called THE SEVEN SECONDS because they're her "seconds" in the fight against crime and evil. Actually, they function more as **operatives** than as a team, like THE SHADOW's crew or DOC SAVAGE's men. But if you get right **down** to it, they're not **operatives either.** They're an Italian family. The Salvotinis. Allow me to introduce you.

DANIEL GROVE is the only **normal** joe in this outfit. He's a cameraman for the Satellite News Network and all he wanted out of life was to **end** it. THRILLER had other plans for this reluctant hero.

DATA is a genius who lives in the back seat of his Rolls Royce (he drives the car with his **brain**). He's not interested in brushing his teeth or playing volleyball or seeing SUPERMAN, THE MOVIE; he just wants **information.** Big, heaping gobs of it!

WHITE SATIN is beautiful, but deadly! One brush of her fingers and you may die laughing ... or vomiting ... or you may fall asleep or stiffen like a board, and that's only assuming you won't just plain drop dead! She's the girl who **everyone's** in love with—but is it really **worth** it?

SALVO is **Tony** Salvotini, THRILLER's twin brother and a crack shot who can blow your eyelashes off at thirty paces or rip off a thug's windbreaker with **live ammo.** He's **too good** a shot to ever have to kill ... his creed: "Only flesh wounds! Only out-patients!! I won't kill a **fly,** so don't **ask me!!!**"

BEAKER PARISH is an enormous synthetic Roman Catholic priest, created in an Erlenmeyer beaker by two renegade Harvard medical students. Adopted by a Roman Catholic parish, including the Salvotini family, the artificial baby grew into a nine-foot-tall seminary student. Amen!

PROXY used to be Robert Furrillo, actor, before he almost burned himself to death freebasing cocaine. The synthetic skin that saved his life proved unstable ... it tends to **melt** every 24 hours. Now he can become **anyone** for a day, depending on how he applies his artificial flesh. (It comes in plastic bags.)

CRACKERJACK is an underaged illegal immigrant from Honduras who is also a master escape artist, pickpocket, safecracker and contortionist. But his **favorite** occupation is watching television and eating Froot Loops.

That's my family, hope you like them! They go on exciting adventures, fight horrible villains like SCABBARD (he's got a three-foot-long scimitar sheathed in the skin of his back! That's right!) and make new friends like KANE CREOLE, rock & roll bankrobber (thinks he's you-know-who). Hey, I **know** they're **weird.** That's family for you.

If you'd like to **subscribe** to THRILLER, send a check or money order for $15.00 to:

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Your $15.00 will bring you twelve (12) monthly issues of THRILLER (DC's deluxe format, $1.25 per copy, and mailed flat in a protective sealed wrapper.) but please allow 10-12 weeks for delivery of your first issue. Also, be sure your check or money order is in U.S. funds and include your name and address, of course, printed legibly and neatly.

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P.S. Thanks, Dick!

You're welcome, Bob. I don't know if I had the energy to write this column anyway...too much travelin' lately. I'll tell you all about it next month! Thank you and good afternoon.

Dick